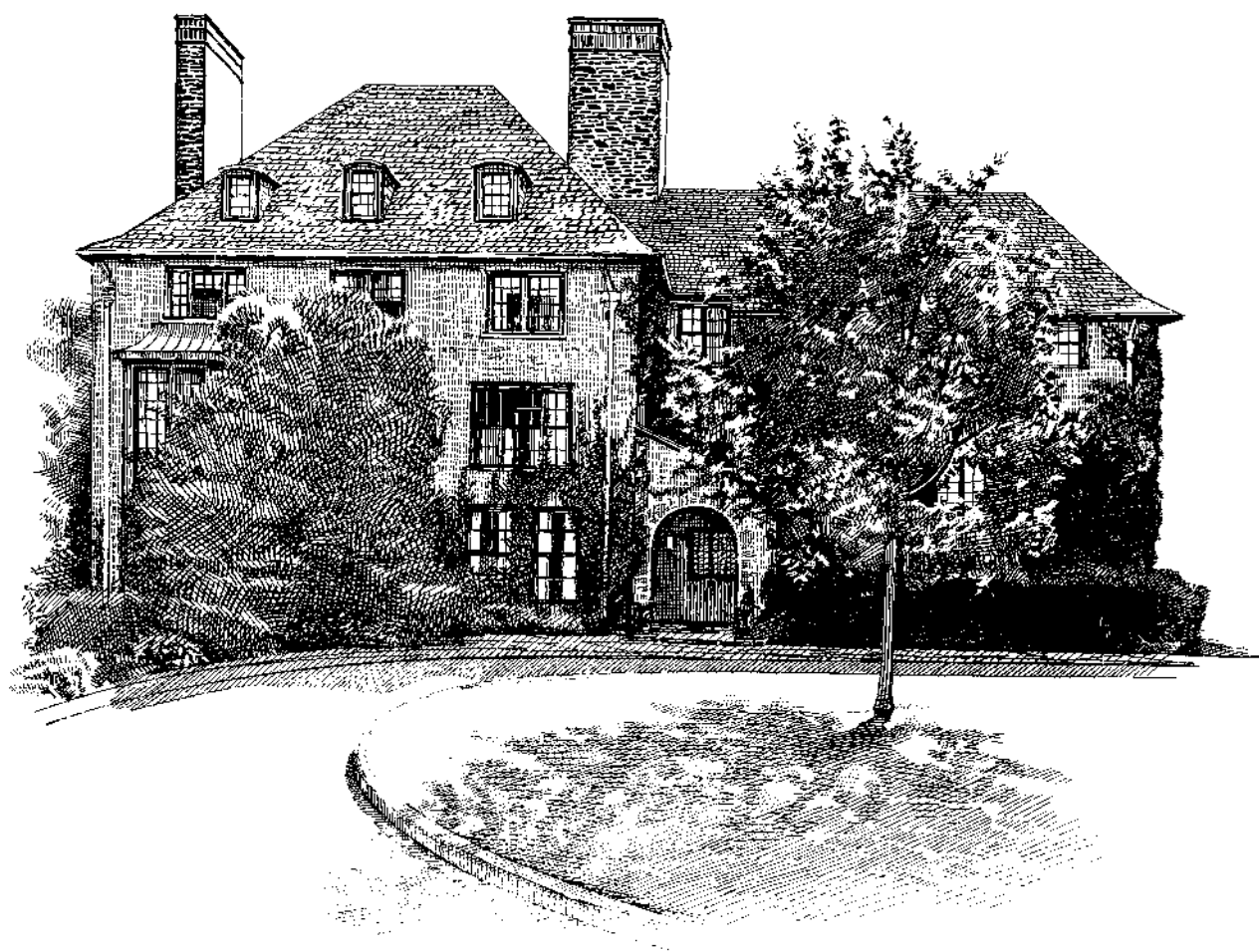


The Inglis House Estate

at the University of Michigan



Anne Duderstadt

A History of the Inglis Family and the Inglis House Estate



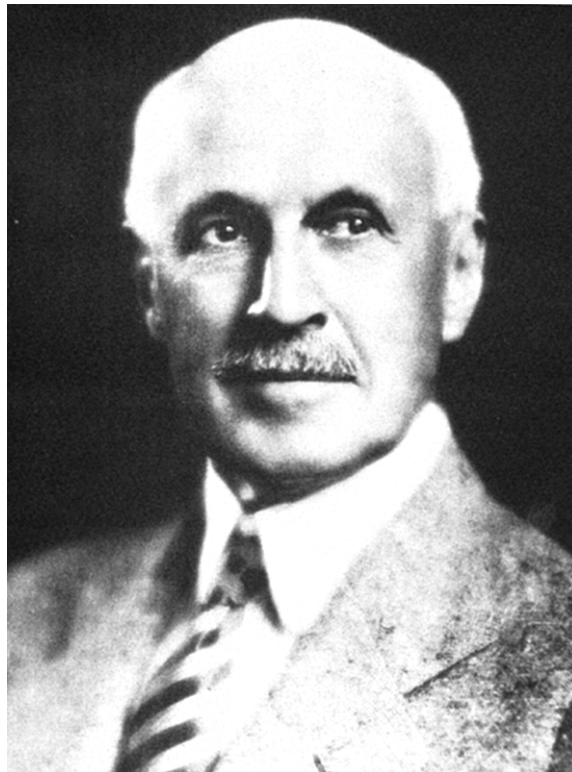
The Inglis House Estate (1947)

James Inglis was born in Detroit, Michigan, on August 15, 1864 as one of seven children of Richard and Agnes (Lambie) Inglis, both Scottish born and raised. His father, a highly respected Detroit physician, died when James was ten. Inglis's brother David, who was 25 and had completed his medical education at the time of his father's death, carried on his father's practice. Agnes Inglis kept the family together until her death on July 4, 1899. After his mother's death, James and his brother Will lived together for three years until they each married.

James Inglis's mother's estate provided him with the sum of twelve thousand dollars. As he states in the autobiography¹ he wrote for his grandchildren. "I had to work to get on, but I was not limited, as so many are, either by poverty on one hand or affluence on the other".

James left school at the age of 14, while he was in the twelfth grade and about ready to graduate from high school. He got a job as office boy for the firm of Gillett and Hall, grain commission merchants, at a salary of \$2.50 a week. He stayed with the firm for only a short time, since his ambition was to work in a wholesale hardware store. He worked in the hardware business for five years, first with Buhl Sons & Co and then with Black and Owen. At age 17 he was on the road selling hardware and cutlery. He had two unsuccessful attempts at starting his own business, first managing a small business that made brake-beams and lock-nuts for railroads, and then a business marketing natural gas to manufacturers. In 1890, at age 26 he joined the American Blower Company, a company manufacturing fans for cooling Detroit's auto factories.

James was involved in numerous other business activities, as noted in his autobiography, including chairman of the board of directors of the National Bank of Detroit.



James Inglis

On October 21, 1903, at the age of 39, James Inglis married Carrie Elizabeth Hughes, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Elizabeth was the daughter of Joseph Hughes, a Presbyterian minister, and Nora Bash Hughes. Elizabeth was born in Fostoria, Ohio in 1878 and later moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana where her father became the minister of the Westminster Church. When James met her in 1903, she was in New York studying music and singing in the Rutgers Presbyterian Church.

James and Elizabeth Inglis started their married life in an apartment on West Kirby Avenue, just off of Woodward Avenue in Detroit. On February 18, 1905, Josephine, their first child was born, but she lived only two days. The Inglis's next lived in a rented house on Van Dyke Place where their daughter Betty was born on September 20, 1906. They built a house on East Grand Boulevard, at the corner of Charlevoix, and their son Jim (Jamie) was born there on January 23, 1910. In 1920 they moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan and purchased a house at 920 Baldwin Avenue (which still exists today as a fraternity house at the University of Michigan).



James and Elizabeth Inglis

James Inglis's sister Kate moved to Ann Arbor with her husband Frank Smith in 1901 and purchased a farm on the east side of the city. The Smith's white farmhouse still stands at 2105 Geddes, near Concord. In the 1920's the Smith's began subdividing the farm into residential lots on what are now Highland, Concord, Lenawee, and Lafayette streets.

James and Elizabeth bought an 8.5 acre plot on the farm that was perched on a hill and extended down toward the Huron River, as the site for their retirement home. They turned to a friend of the family, Lilburn "Woody" Woodworth, to design and build a house in the English country style, constructed of stones and irregular brick with a slate roof. The 12,000 square foot home cost around \$250,000, a rather considerable sum at that time.



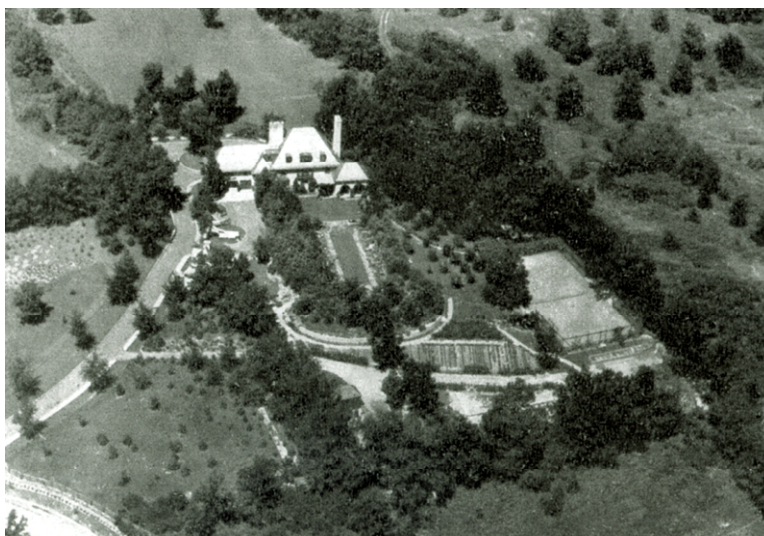
The hilltop site of the Inglis House

The house contained twelve rooms on four levels. The first floor consisted of a formal entryway, a large library, men's and women's restrooms, and service facilities. On the second floor was a combination living / dining room, breakfast room (called the "coffee room" by the Inglis's), kitchen, pantry and a three-car garage with electrically-operated garage doors. The master bedroom with dressing room and bath, two bedrooms, each with a bath and a maid's apartment were on the third floor. Their son Jamie's room was on the fourth floor, a large bedroom, with Ann Arbor's first walk-in shower. Also on this floor was a large fan, a product of Inglis's American Blower Company, designed to keep the house cool in the summer.



An early photograph of the Inglis manor house (1928)

The grounds of the estate included a caretaker's cottage, a greenhouse, workshop, a tennis court, a three-hole golf course, and at one time a peacock house with peacocks. (The peacocks eventually had to be removed because of their noise.)



An aerial photograph of the Inglis estate, showing the gardens, orchard, and tennis court.

Of particular note were the extensive gardens surrounding the manor house, designed by Elizabeth Inglis and considered to be among the finest in the state. In keeping with its English country estate character, a large meadow extended from the front of the manor house down to the forest along the Huron River.



The meadow running from the front of the manor house toward the Huron River
(The meadow was also the site of a three-hole golf course.)

In the rear of the house was a formal English garden. Elizabeth Inglis also developed a cutting garden, and a wildflower garden. Adjacent to the house was an orchard. An extensive irrigation system was designed for the gardens, with water supplied from a 170-foot deep well and pumphouse on the property. The gardens were fertilized from a compost pile.



An early view of the formal English garden at the rear of the manor house

Elizabeth Inglis's gardening skills were widely recognized. She developed a hardy, northern strain of boxwood known today as Inglis boxwood.

Elizabeth was very generous with her flowers and plants and supplied cuttings for many Ann Arbor gardens.



Elizabeth Inglis as a gardener

During the renovation of the gardens in the 1990's, the Korean Mum garden was reestablished from the mums that Elizabeth had given to Katharine Leidy years earlier. Walter Stampfli was the gardener for the Inglis Estate, first employed by the Inglis family in 1933. Stampfli and his wife, who served as the Inglis's housekeeper, lived in the gardener's cottage. Mrs. Stampfli died in 1969, but Walter lived in the cottage until 1975 when he moved to a retirement home on North Main Street in Ann Arbor.²



The formal English garden of Inglis House

Inglis House was the gathering place for the extended Inglis family. Some of the family members and friends of the family shared some of their fondest memories in an article written by Carol Inglis Spicer,³ a niece of James Inglis. Jim (Jamie) the son of James and Elizabeth remembered the “terrific” asparagus in his mother’s vegetable garden; the electrically-operated garage doors; and – especially- the double sinks in his parents’ bathroom–quite a luxury in the 1930’s when the average family was fortunate to have one bathroom.

Carol’s brother David recalls skiing down the hill in the meadow in the front of the house towards the Arboretum (on what was in summer a three-hole golf course). Then, after skiing, he would leave his skis outside the French doors and step into the library to join in activities.

Marge Litzenbert, a friend of Betty Inglis, remembered the cook Frieda’s boned chicken within boned chicken. As an attendant in Betty’s wedding, she recalled the bride walking alone down the stately staircase.



The Inglis House living/ dining room

Carol’s fondest memories were of the “young ones” stretched out on the floor in front of the fire in the paneled and book-lined library listening to records. She recalled playing tennis on Saturday afternoons and all day Sundays, sitting between sets, on the stone wall or on the bench of the stone-paved courtyard above, drinking lemonade. She also remembered Frieda’s white-frosted cakes covered with melted bitter chocolate, and the family dinners at the long table in the living/ dining room with her Uncle Jim and father Will reminiscing, with laughter, about old days in the house on Gratiot Avenue in Detroit and their bachelor apartment years together.



James and Elizabeth Inglis, with their son Jim and daughter Betty

James Inglis died in March 1950, leaving the house to his wife, with the stipulation that after her death, the estate would be given to the University of Michigan to serve as a home for the university's president. However, Elizabeth delivered a quitclaim deed to the estate to the Board of Regents on May 23, 1951 and moved to Kalamazoo to be near her daughter. Elizabeth Inglis later moved to Portola, California.

When Michigan's new President Harlan Hatcher and his wife Anne arrived in Ann Arbor in 1951, they were offered the Inglis House estate as a residence. (In fact, President Hatcher once recalled fondly that when he was being recruited by the University, he was driven by a Regent up to the estate and around the front circular drive, and told that all of this could be his.) However the Hatcher's declined in favor of the more accessible "White House" at 815 South University, which had been the traditional residence of university presidents since the first President, Henry Tappan.

In May of 1952, Wilbur Pierpont, Vice-President of Business and Finance presented an informal proposal for the use of Inglis House to the Board of Regents.⁴ In June 1953, Vice-President Pierpont presented a more detailed report to the Regents in which he proposed using the house as a guesthouse for visitors to the university and a meeting place for small groups. This use would require expenditure of \$20,000 to furnish the house with quarters for a resident caretaker and for the use of the ground floor as a meeting place. This estimate included kitchen equipment, furniture for the living rooms and sleeping rooms, carpets, draperies, lamps, etc. Pierpont estimated the general maintenance for the facility at approximate \$2000 a year. The Regents approved the general plan.⁵

Under the direction of Gene Luther, university decorator, the house was redecorated and furnished, and it was ready for guest use and formal entertaining in 1954. Laura Kimball was engaged to serve as resident manager and hostess. Walter Stampfli continued to live in the gardener's cottage and took loving care of the gardens and grounds for a number of years.⁶

The house was in constant use throughout the 1950's and 1960's. The Hatchers entertained various community and campus groups and hosted many visiting dignitaries. Dr. Jonas Salk, who came to Ann Arbor at the time of the polio vaccine evaluation, was one of the first guests. He and his wife and three children stayed for a week in the quiet top-floor suite, originally the quarters of young James Inglis. Edward R. Murrow, commencement speaker at the 1961 June exercises stayed at Inglis House. Other guests included, the Arnold Toynbees, Harrison Salisbury, editor of the New York Times, and the ambassadors of Burma, New Zealand, India, Thailand and the Netherlands.⁷ In recent years, President and Mrs. Gerald Ford and the Dalai Lama have been among the many guests at Inglis House.

After the retirement of Walter Stampfli, Walter Chambers, head of landscape architecture took over the duties of the grounds. Later Charles Jenkins became horticulturist for the estate. During the period of financial stress in Michigan during the 1960s, when the university had to borrow money to meet its payroll, the gardens along the edges of the great lawn to the north were simplified. However the formal gardens around the house remained much as they were in Elizabeth Inglis's day. Anne Hatcher noted that Mrs. Inglis visited the house several times and expressed her satisfaction with the use and care of the estate.⁸

However by the 1980's the house and grounds were suffering from the deferral of needed maintenance, as were most facilities on the campus. The slate roof was leaking, and the interior was well worn, and with the severe budget cuts experienced by the University, the grounds also suffered. By the late 1980s, the quality of the interior space had deteriorated to the point that guest activity had declined significantly, and the facility was used primarily for internal university meetings such as those conducted by the Regents.

The situation reached a crisis point in 1988 when engineers from the University Plant Department warned that the slate roof had deteriorated to the point where it was in danger of collapse unless repaired. After extensive discussion, the University decided to move ahead with the replacement of the roof, an expensive task requiring skilled artisans. At the same time, a budget was approved for the renovation of the interior of the house.

The renovation of the manor house, the gardens, and the grounds and the restoration of the Inglis House estate to its original elegance is illustrated through a photographic essay in Part V of this book.



The Inglis Family,
James and Elizabeth,
daughter Betty and son Jim

¹ James Inglis, *A Sketch of My Life for the Benefit of My Grandchildren*, October 1947: Since much of this material was based upon this autobiography, it has been reproduced in an appendix in this book.

² Private conversation with Wilbur Pierpont, 1999

³ Carol Spicer, article from Bentley Library archives

⁴ Regent's Proceedings, May 1952, Volume 1951-54, Page 422

⁵ Regent's Proceedings, June 1953, Volume 1951-54, Page 904

⁶ Letter to the Editor, Anne Hatcher, Ann Arbor Observer, November, 1990

⁷ Carol Spicer, "Ann Arbor's Inglis House Serves U-M's Visiting VIPS" D.A.C. News, April 1962

⁸ Letter to the Editor, Anne Hatcher, Ann Arbor Observer, November, 1990